

Financial Aid Fundamentals for Nevada Students Who Have Experienced Foster Care

What is financial aid, and how do I obtain it?

FINANCIAL AID (or STUDENT AID) = MONEY FOR SCHOOL

Financial Aid is an umbrella term for academic financial assistance—most often used to refer to financial assistance for postsecondary education/college (including vocational/trade certificate and degree options, many of which are offered at public community colleges). Nearly all forms of financial aid require students to complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) before they can be considered—even aid that is not directly tied to FAFSA submission and/or requires a separate application—due to the fact that the FAFSA provides key information needed to determine a student’s financial need.

NOTE: FAFSA = FEDERAL STUDENT AID APPLICATION FORM (the FAFSA, itself, is NOT a form of financial aid) → Check out the [Foster Care-Specific FAFSA Fact Sheet](#) for more information on FAFSA completion!

The different TYPES of financial aid that a student can obtain—all of which directly or indirectly require FAFSA completion/submission (and, in some cases, an additional form or application)—are as follows ([SOURCE](#)):

- 1) **“GIFT AID”** = Financial aid that is awarded to a student—based on foster care history, financial need, and/or other specialized eligibility criteria—that DOES NOT NEED TO BE REPAID (i.e. it is a “gift”), provided that the student is maintaining sufficient attendance in their classes and adhering to all financial aid regulations:
 - a) **Course Registration Fee Waivers** (such as the [NSHE Foster Youth Fee Waiver](#), which requires submitting both the FAFSA and the form accessible in the link provided here)
 - b) **Vouchers** (such as the foster care-specific [Chafee Education\(al\) and Training Voucher](#), known as “ETV,” which is administered by the federal child welfare system and requires submitting both the FAFSA and an additional application)
 - c) **Grants** ([federal](#), [state](#), [college/university-specific](#), and/or [private or nonprofit organization-specific](#)—many of which students are automatically considered for after FAFSA submission, and some of which require an extra application)
 - d) **Scholarships** (from many different types of sources, most of which require students to submit an additional application)
- 2) **Federal Work-Study** = Financial aid that income-eligible students can earn through campus-based employment, to help pay for their expenses → This is a [Federal Student Aid](#) program, so eligibility is determined based on FAFSA information (you must mark “YES” to the question asking if you want to be considered!). It provides part-time employment opportunities to enrolled students with financial need, allowing them to earn money to help pay for their education and living expenses.
- 3) **Student Loan** = Financial aid that students can borrow—if they lack sufficient gift aid options—that NEEDS TO BE REPAID, WITH INTEREST → Student loans are the least beneficial form of financial aid because they need to be repaid, with interest (*interest* = a charge for borrowed money that is generally a percentage of the amount borrowed). They should be the last resort for students—after all other possible financial aid options have been exhausted. If needed, [federal student loans](#) from the U.S. Department of Education are the best option, as they have lower, fixed interest rates and more flexibility.



Why is financial aid so important?

Financial aid (student aid) is important because students are expected to pay for college courses (course registration fees), unlike Kindergarten-12th grade courses. College students also have to pay for special course fees for some courses (such as additional fees for distance education/online courses, laboratory fees, and special course supplies fees), per semester student fees (such as the Health Service fee), and books needed for their courses. Additionally, the majority of college students—even those who are working—need financial aid to help them cover their critical living expenses while enrolled in courses. These expenses—most notably housing, food, and transportation—are factored into the student’s full annual Cost of Attendance that is calculated by their college/university. Financial aid makes college more accessible, especially when students are able to secure ample “gift aid” (i.e. financial aid that does NOT need to be repaid) that eliminates the need for excessive student loans (which need to be REPAID, with interest!) or work hours. This allows students to focus on their coursework, rather than how to fund their college education.

QUESTIONS about which financial aid options YOU may qualify for?

- 1) Check out **PAGE 2 of this fact sheet**, as well as these comprehensive resources for Nevada students with foster care history:
 - a) [Nevada Fostering Success Financial Aid and FAFSA Guide](#); & b) [Nevada Fostering Success Financial Aid Toolkit](#).
- 2) Contact **Laura Obrist**, with the [NSHE Fostering Success Initiative](#), if you have additional questions.
 - » Email Address: lobrist@nshe.nevada.edu; Phone Number (call or text): [702-522-7035](tel:702-522-7035)



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Foster Care-Specific Financial Aid Options for Current/Former Nevada Child Welfare Dependents

- 1) **Foster Youth Fee Waiver** — Administered by the **Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE)**
 - ⇒ **Who It's For:** Students who are/were dependents of the Nevada foster care system, at or after age 13 (eligibility ends on 26th birthday), and are enrolled at one or more NSHE schools (UNLV, UNR, NSC, CSN, GBC, TMCC, and/or WNC)
 - ⇒ **What it Covers:** Directly WAIVES *most* major course registration fees at any of the 7 degree-granting NSHE schools (exact amount waived = base course registration fees + any applicable lower-division lab fees for all eligible courses)
 - ⇒ **Additional Information:** **Who, What, When, Where, & Why Fact Sheet**
- 2) **Federal Chafee Education(al) and Training Voucher (ETV)** — Administered by the **U.S. DHHS Administration for Children & Families** (Designated Nevada ETV Administrators: **Clark County Social Service** & the **Children's Cabinet**)
 - ⇒ **Who It's For:** Students who are currently in foster care, aged out of foster care, or left foster care after their 16th birthday
 - For students who exited care at/after age 16, but before aging out, eligibility depends on the state administering the funds; and the age at which eligibility ends also varies between states. Contact your STATE OF DEPENDENCY first!
 - ⇒ **What it Covers:** Provides up to \$5,000 per academic year, for **up to 5 years** (whether or not the years are consecutive) or **until your 26th birthday** (whichever comes first)—for any expenses within Cost of Attendance
 - ⇒ **Nevada-Specific ETV Contact Information:** **ETV@ClarkCountyNV.gov** (for current/former Clark County foster care dependents & out-of-state students residing in Clark County who are unable to receive funding from their state of dependency) OR **ccarstairs@childrenscabinet.org** (for current/former foster care dependents from any other NV county & out-of-state students residing in any other NV county who are unable to receive funding from their state of dependency)
- 3) **Otto A. Huth Scholarship Fund** — Administered by the **Community Foundation of Northern Nevada** - **NO 2024-25 Award**
 - ⇒ **Who It's For:** Students who are about to age out/have already aged out of foster care, in Nevada, and are pursuing postsecondary education at a U.S. school (2- or 4-year college/university, including trade/vocational programs)
 - ⇒ **What it Covers:** Provides up to \$10,000 per academic year, for up to 5 years, with a maximum total award of \$40,000 to any given student (based on need)—for course registration fees (in-state & out-of-state students)/tuition fees (out-of-state students), on-campus room and board, campus-based meal plans, books, and student health insurance
- 4) **Foster Children Education Scholarship** — Administered by the **Community Foundation of Northern Nevada**
 - ⇒ **Who It's For:** Students who are/were in foster care in Nevada, were never legally adopted (or expected to be), and are pursuing postsecondary education at a U.S. school (2- or 4-year college/university, including trade/vocational programs)
 - ⇒ **What it Covers:** Provides up to \$10,000 per academic year, based on need—for any school and/or living expenses within Cost of Attendance (course registration fees, student fees, and book costs are prioritized, followed by other expenses)
- 5) **Career Opportunity Scholarship** — Administered by **St. Jude's Ranch for Children**
 - ⇒ **Who It's For:** Students who are/were participants in a St. Jude's Ranch for Children program and are pursuing postsecondary education at a U.S. school (2- or 4-year college/university, including trade/vocational programs)
 - ⇒ **What it Covers:** Provides funding (amount varies) toward course registration fees (in-state & out-of-state students)/tuition fees (out-of-state students), lab fees, student housing, books, school supplies (including computers & calculators), and on-the-job training
- 6) **Children's Service Guild of Southern Nevada Scholarship** — Administered by the **Public Education Foundation**
 - ⇒ **Who It's For:** High school seniors in Clark County, NV who have overcome personal challenges, have been touched by the Family Court System (Dept of Family Services/Dept of Juvenile Justice Services), are pursuing postsecondary education (2- or 4-year college/university, including trade/vocational programs), and have not yet turned 18 years old
 - ⇒ **What it Covers:** Provides \$2,500 for the academic year, toward course registration fees (in-state & out-of-state students)/tuition fees (out-of-state students), and/or other "appropriate educational expenses" within Cost of Attendance
- 7) **Dare to Dream Scholarship** — Administered by **Volunteers of America, Northern California & Northern Nevada**
 - ⇒ **Who It's For:** Students who are/were in foster care, currently live/have lived in Northern California or Northern Nevada, and are pursuing postsecondary education (2- or 4-year college/university, including trade/vocational programs)
 - ⇒ **What it Covers:** Provides funding (amount varies) that can be applied toward any expenses within Cost of Attendance
- 8) **Village of Becoming Scholarship** — Administered by **Village of Becoming**
 - ⇒ **Who It's For:** Students who are from low-income backgrounds and/or otherwise underprivileged home environments, particularly those who have experienced foster care and/or homelessness, and are pursuing postsecondary education (2- or 4-year college/university, including trade/vocational programs)
 - ⇒ **What it Covers:** Provides funding (\$1,000-\$3,000 for the academic year) toward any expenses within Cost of Attendance